

409 Colgate Avenue
Vestal, NY 13850

August 12, 1987

His Eminence Archbishop
Torkom Manoogian
Diocese of the Armenian Church
630 Second Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Dear Sir:

Unpleasant incidents have occurred in the Binghamton community during this past year -- incidents which you have knowledge of and, therefore, I will not reiterate.

I am writing to you to express my great concern, for I see the imminent destruction of a once cohesive community. This saddens me deeply, for I was born and raised in this community and have many fond memories of St. Gregory's Church. I learned to be proud of my heritage, I learned about my religion, and as I went through college and became a teacher I, in turn, taught a good number of the younger parishioners in Sunday school at this Church.

As a teacher, it is very disturbing to see that the youth in our Armenian community are now being denied their due right to learn more about their religion, culture, language and music because a disgruntled few have decided to lock the doors and keep everybody out. As a teacher, I have always stressed to my students that they can never learn enough. So, too, in the education of young Armenians. There is so much to know about the Armenian religion, culture, etc. But how are they going to learn if the doors are locked and the priest is banned?

Further, what kind of lasting impression will this have on our youth if this is allowed to continue? The young people in this community have had a priest for the past 14 years. What must children think when Mom and Dad say, "We can't go to church today. The doors are locked and the priest has been fired." If the children question the actions of the adults, they have a right to. They have a right to be disappointed and angry. An important part of their lives has been torn from them because a few adults have decided to create a controversy.

As an adult, I can't condone these terrible actions, and as an educator, I am outraged that young children and teens are being denied the right to learn and grow.

As the years pass, the number of Armenians diminishes. If we want the world to remember us in future generations, we should instill as strongly as possible in our children what an Armenian is. It will be their responsibility to keep the world aware of our place in history.

As spiritual leader of the Armenian Church of America, isn't it your responsibility to see that Armenian religion, culture, language, and music be preserved? To lock the doors of a place of worship borders on heresy. To deny our children, our future, their rights to worship and learn is as large a crime as there exists.

I ask you to please find it in your heart to do something about this ghastly situation. As time passes, the situation grows worse, and the problem can't be ignored. Ignoring it won't make it go away. It is festering and spreading like a cancer. Left untreated, it will only destroy.

Sincerely,

Ruby Hagopian Cassidy
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